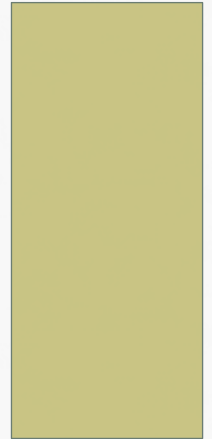


GRAHAM COUNTY PIONEER DAY COMMUNICATIONS EXERCISE



BRIAN DOUGLAS
DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

SEPTEMBER 20, 2011



EVENT DESCRIPTION

- **Event Name:** Pioneer Day Exercise
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- **Type of Response:** Functional
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- **Event Date:** July 23, 2011
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- **Duration:** 5 hours
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- **Location:** Thatcher Arizona

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- Graham County Health/Emergency Services
- Graham County Search and Rescue
- Graham County Sheriff Dispatch
- Graham County Sheriff Department
- Safford Police Department
- Thatcher Police Department
- Pima Police Department
- Eastern Arizona College Police Department
- Arizona Department of Public Safety
- Thatcher Fire Department
- Eastern Arizona College Police Department
- Southwest Ambulance Service

EVENT RADIO FREQUENCIES

- AIRS 5 (Radio Channel Designation for Event as it is compatible with DPS UHF)
- Fire – Thatcher VHF Fire Channel
- EMS – Southwest Ambulance VHF Channel
- Back-up – VTAC12

EVENT SUMMARY

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints celebrate 'Pioneer Days' annually with a parade, a meal with a variety of different foods, activities, and fireworks annually. This annual event requires traffic control, security, medical, fire safety, and of course communication between agencies. With about 5,000 to 6,000 people expected in attendance, this event utilizes a lot of resources from a small community. Our communications system changed from 'Wide Band' to 'Narrow Band' in June of 2011. This exercise gave us an added bonus of being able to test the system and make sure all radios were in compliance and working order.

EVENT OBJECTIVES

- Objective 1: Provide for the Safety and Health of the public Safety Personnel and the private sector.
- Objective 2: Monitor real world happenings in Graham County, Safford, Thatcher, And Pima maintaining infrastructure services.
- Objective 3: Identify and set up the Command Post.
- Objective 4: Operate within the Unified Public Safety ICS command structure.
- Objective 5: Use plain language in all radio communications.
- Objective 6: Establish and maintain effective communications.
- Objective 7: Identify Parade route.
- Objective 8: Identify activity area.
- Objective 9: Test Narrow Band capability after changeover.

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

- 10/20/2010 Graham County Narrow Band Communications Meeting
- 4/7/2011 ADEM Pioneer Day Communications Exercise Planning Meeting
- 4/26/2011 ADEM Pioneer Day Communications Exercise Planning Meeting
- 5/18/2011 ADEM Pioneer Day Communications Exercise Planning Meeting
- IEP forms with Jerry Nelson, IC
- 5/18/2011 Graham County Narrow Band Communications Meeting
- 6/15/2011 ADEM Pioneer Day Communications Exercise Planning Meeting
- 6/15/2011 Graham County Narrow Band Communications Meeting
- 6/20/2011 Switch from 'Wide' to 'Narrow Band' and re-program radios
- 7/20/2011 Graham County Narrow Band follow-up meeting
- 7/23/2011 Pioneer Day Event

THE EVENT

The event selected for this communications exercise is the Gila Valley Pioneer Day Celebration. The event was held in the Town of Thatcher this year. The celebration is in honor of pioneers that left their homes and began a long and treacherous trek to settle in the Gila Valley many years ago. Activities included a parade, games, food booths, entertainment, fireworks and socializing. The parade route was through Thatcher and activities followed at the Eastern Arizona College Football Field.

PARADE, FOOD, GAMES, ENTERTAINMENT, AND FIRE WORKS



ORGANIZATION

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was the sponsoring organization and provided the event planning team, command organization, porta potties and hand washing stations for the large crowd that was expected. They also provided traffic control at the stadium, enough water for everyone expected, and a physician to man a first aid station.



INCIDENT COMMAND

Command Bus



Bus Operations
Steve James, S&R



INCIDENT COMMAND

Incident Commander
Jerry Nelson, GCSO



Communications
Scott Howell, GCSO



INCIDENT COMMAND

Planning

Jeff McCormies, GCSO



Logistics

Mark Stevens, Thatcher PD



INCIDENT COMMAND

Operations

Mike McEuen, EAC Police



Safety/Medical

Gary Graves, SWA



INCIDENT COMMAND

Fire

Mike Payne, Chief TFD



PIO

P.J. Allred, GCSO



INCIDENT COMMAND

Liaison

Brian Douglas, GCEM



Evaluation Team



OTHER PLAYERS

SWA Medic 824 & 825
Natalie, Kiley, & Chris



EAC Police & Security
Randy Morris & Ned Rhodes



OTHER PLAYERS

Pima Police
Diane Cauthen, Chief



Safford Police
John Griffin, Chief



PRE & POST EVENT BRIEFINGS

Pre-Event



Post-Event



CHANGING TO PLAIN LANGUAGE



Plain language will replace codes

By Diane Saunders

Staff Writer

Published on *Wednesday, June 8, 2011 10:40 AM MST*

Most people who watch TV police shows know there is a number code for just about every action taken by emergency personnel. In Graham County and beyond, those codes will soon be replaced with plain language — everyday words instead of numbers.

The change to plain language is a requirement emergency agencies must meet to qualify for federal grants, Thatcher Police Chief Mark Stevens said. County agencies will be evaluated in their use of plain language during Pioneer Days, July 23 and 24.

Changing to plain language will help bring continuity to radio messages between officers and agencies. While all emergency agencies in Graham use the same number codes, there is a lack of continuity between other agencies in Arizona.

This has the potential to cause confusion, Thatcher Fire Chief Mike Payne said.

For example, agencies could be called to help at a major disaster in Sierra Vista. If the number codes in Sierra Vista differ from those used by Graham County agencies, precious time and energy would be used just trying to communicate with each other.

According to Stevens, changing from number codes to plain language can be difficult — especially for someone who has used those codes more than 30 years.

Examples of the old number codes and the new plain language phrases follow:

- Old: 10-4. New: Affirmative, understood, copy.
- Old: 10-9. New: Repeat.
- Old: 902H. New: Hospital.
- Old: 998. New: Officer involved shooting.
- Old: 1381. New: DUI, impaired driver.
- Old: 7. New: Meal break.

SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS OBSERVED

The major strengths that were observed during this response are as follows:

- The Graham County staff and response partners demonstrated excellent team work and communication throughout the response.
- All agencies involved in the exercise worked well together, showed good leadership ability, and covered all assignments with professionalism.
- The Graham County was able to reach its communications goals during the exercise.

TOP FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the top recommendations from our Participant Feedback Form:

- More radios with updated capability are needed.
- There is a need for ear pieces or external microphones to help in receiving communication during events with large crowds and noise.
- Updated communications equipment is needed in the county's Command Bus.
- More work is needed using the 'Plain Language' format.
- More exercises are needed to help our agencies work with one another in the Incident Command System.

NOTE

- Graham County has recently switched from 'Wide' to 'Narrow Band'. This exercise helped to identify any problems after the changeover.
- Some agencies updated radios and equipment such as ear pieces to be compatible with the Narrow Band system are on backorder and were not available. This area of improvement will take care of it self when all equipment is delivered.
- All counties had not been notified of our narrow band change over with new PL Tones. We need to make sure all partners can communicate.

QUESTIONS

